

# WALES



**2019 proved to be another amazing year at so many levels as God continued to bless this great ministry. We saw not just great growth of chaplaincy roles and opportunities but also across a wider range of sports throughout Wales.**

The phone didn't seem to stop ringing with new requests and at times it felt like "whatever next"? which is just so exciting, bringing more amazing answers to prayers.

It was fantastic to place one male and one female chaplain within Welsh elite hockey to support the senior international players, coaches and staff where feedback has already been so positive. We have also placed a chaplain within Welsh elite cycling at the Newport Velodrome which has again been well received.



*(Helen Lewis, John Funnell, Karen Lorimer)*

Furthermore, four chaplains have been placed into Welsh elite gymnastics covering a wide age range with one chaplain specifically supporting the management staff. We supported all the major Run4Wales events with a chaplaincy team which came about due to two tragic deaths in the 2018 Cardiff Half Marathon. There were many great conversations at each event, along with the sad honour of sharing some words of reflection and encouragement to one of the families as they ran with friends in memorial for Ben McDonald who tragically died running the event the year before.

We have seen our footprint across disability sport grow and real opportunities to show the love and compassion of Jesus into this wonderful, but sometimes challenging environment. Steve Jones, Heather Lewis and Elliot Mayor are doing a great job in driving this forward. Through Steve, Wales continues to support and train people across the globe to work and develop chaplaincy in their countries (See Steve's report for more info). Elliot is also doing a fantastic job in developing the work across North Wales where again we are seeing much progress.



*(The importance of chaplains praying)*

Many of the above opportunities have come because of Heather's role which takes her in to the Wales National Sports Centre most weeks, and the benefit of doing major games (like the Commonwealth Games) chaplaincy has led to real connectivity.

We have continued to build chaplaincy numbers in both rugby and football and are getting many other organisations asking. Just before Christmas we had the Welsh Surf Life Savers Association ask for chaplaincy across their 31 clubs to support 3000 members. Life savers to the



*(Chaplains to Martial Arts)*

life savers! Similarly, we are still waiting on confirmation from the WRU to endorse chaplaincy at all their clubs, some 310 across Wales. With most clubs now having both men and women's sides, there is a need for many, many more chaplains. Indeed, our greatest challenge remains finding suitable Christian people who can commit the time and energy required. Cricket Wales may potentially want support too! Please keep praying with us that our great God will keep meeting these ever-growing needs.

In Wales we believe prayer is vital to do what we do, and it's been amazing to see we now have over 75 sports chaplaincy roles and could well be soon over 100 if we could fulfil all the requests we have. Prayerfully could YOU be one of those needed chaplains?

We continue to look to upskill ourselves and many of our chaplains are now accredited Mental Health First Aiders with the hope that all our chaplains will undertake this over the next year or so. This will give us even greater traction and added value into our roles to support our clubs and NGBs.

Spiritually we are seeing so many gentle opportunities to witness and share why we do what we do. Our boxing chaplain took a major funeral amongst the traveller community following the death of a boxer and he is beginning to see much blessing in that field. People are constantly amazed we all do our roles voluntarily, often going way beyond what SCUk asks of us. Over Christmas many athletes – able bodied and not so able, enjoyed carol services, helped feed the homeless, undertook things like Operation Christmas Child, and enjoyed special New Year's Eve parties organised by local churches.

I truly believe that with the heart to pray God will continue to do great things in Wales. To God be the glory.

**Martin Lewis**

National Director for Wales and Chaplain to Cardiff Blues

